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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: COP15, IRAN, ITALY, GERMANY-AFGHANISTAN,
GREECE;BERLIN

- ¶1. Lead Stories Summary
- ¶2. (Environment) Copenhagen Climate Summit
- ¶3. (Iran) Nuclear Conflict
- ¶4. (Italy) Aftermath of Attack on Berlusconi
- ¶5. (Germany-Afghanistan) Afghanistan/ zu Guttenberg
- ¶6. (Greece) Financial Crisis

¶1. Lead Stories Summary

ZDF-TV's and ARD-TV's primetime newscasts opened with stories on Defense Minister zu Guttenberg's rejection of allegations that he lied about the September 4 airstrikes. Most newspapers led with stories on the financial debacle of Bavaria's state bank, BayernLB. Frankfurter Rundschau led with a story on the COP15. Editorials focused on the debate about the September 4 airstrikes in Afghanistan and the BayernLB.

¶2. (Environment) Copenhagen Climate Summit

Sddeutsche (12/15) carried a brief front-page story under the headline "Poor and rich countries argue at the climate summit," noting that "the dispute between the poor and rich countries over sharing the burden of climate protection is growing more acute. African countries temporarily called off negotiations with industrialized countries."

ZDF-TV's Heute correspondent Volker Angres said in Copenhagen (12/15):
"Ban Ki Moon will come and exert pressure at this UN conference. Let's hope that the state leaders will give a new impetus to the

negotiations. However, the presence of 190 state leaders can be obstructive because everybody wants to look good and nobody wants to lose face. This means that things will be brought down to the smallest common denominator. I'm not expecting a powerful conclusion."

Regional Rhein Neckar Zeitung (12/15) editorialized: "The supposedly weak countries impressively demonstrate their numerical superiority.

They are backed up by China, which likes to see itself as an advocate of the poor because it could avoid reduction goals under Kyoto. However, everything that carries the old label has not a chance in the United States.... It is now Connie Hedegaard's turn. The head of the negotiations must find a way out of the seemingly helpless situation. A compromise might be possible because the threatened islands states must prefer a new treaty to no treaty at all. It should also be in their interest to include China. However, to reach that the industrialized countries must put more money on the table."

Regional Mannheimer Morgen (12/15) opined: "Nothing is too late yet, the decisive phase of the summit is only starting now. A success

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will depend on how much responsibility the U.S. and China are willing to bear. The conference is historical in any case: for the first time in history, developing countries did not just play the role of onlookers during international negotiations. This is the only positive effect of climate change."

Spiegel Online (12/15) led with a story saying "serious protests have shaken Copenhagen in the night to Tuesday. At the margin of the UN climate summit, the Danish police took action with tear gas and water cannons against protesters. The police arrested 200 people."

13. (Iran) Nuclear Conflict

Tagesspiegel (12/15) headlined: "Tougher Stance in Iran," and reported: "The dispute between the government and the opposition could soon escalate again in Iran. Authorities announced the arrest of several dissidents who are accused of having destroyed photos of the revolutionary leader Khomeini.... Secretary Clinton described the U.S. policy of an extended hand as a failure so far. As a result, she demanded further international pressure in the nuclear dispute with

Tehran.... Meanwhile, three U.S. backpackers will be charged in Iran for illegally crossing the border." Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/15)

headlined: "Arrests in Tehran," and wrote in its intro: "The clashes between the government and the opposition seem to be escalating in Iran." The paper also mentions the case of the three U.S. tourists,

noting: "If found guilty they could face a death sentence.... Ahmadinejad recently suggested that Iran could exchange the three Americans against several Iranian diplomats arrested in Iraq." FT Deutschland (12/15) headlined: "Tehran's regime steps up repression

opposition remains active despite powerful measures against them."
In
a separate splash, the paper noted: "China holds its hand over
Iran."

14. (Italy) Aftermath of Attack on Berlusconi

All papers (12/15) carried reports and some editorials on the bloody
attack on Italy's Prime Minister Berlusconi. They also refer to
conservative Italian politicians who are talking about "a climate of
hatred" that has developed under Berlusconi. Sueddeutsche Zeitung
(12/15) opined under the headline: "Italy, Extremely Heated," and
judged: "The crime has again set in motion the discussion over the
state of the political debate in Italy. The climate has heated up
and
the main reason is Berlusconi himself, not only because he is very
polarizing but it is also inappropriate, because the right-wing
press
is now considering the party leader of the L'Italia dei Valori,
Antonio di Pietro, as being the instigator of the crime. For
months,
Italy's president has called for a more respectful discourse. If

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this
crime [against Berlusconi] now contributes to a moderation in tone,
then this would be totally appropriate."

Frankfurter Rundschau and Leipziger Volkszeitung (12/15) had this to
say: "In any other country, the attack of a mentally handicapped man
on the leader of the government would soon be forgotten, but in
Italy
it is impossible to return to everyday business. Berlusconi's face
partly covered with blood is the symbol of a country in which the
political discussion changed to hostility and hatred a long time
ago.
An incident like the one from Sunday was imminent and the one who
was
the least surprised at the attack was Berlusconi himself. Since
entering Italy's politics 15 years, ago, he has considerably
poisoned
the political climate in the country. Berlusconi but also the
political hardliners in the opposing camp, such as Antonio di
Pietro,
have turned Italy into a country in which the trenches seem to be
unbridgeable and the camps are no longer able to talk to each
other."

Regional daily WestfQlischer Anzeiger of Hamm (12/15) judged: "Many
critics of Italy's government leader consider the attack a
consequence
of the totally poisoned political climate in Italy. And quite a few
people agree that Berluscone contributed considerably to this
development. We must assume that he will now take advantage of the
attack on him. That is why the attacker also did a great disservice
to those who politically opposed Berlusconi in the past."

Braunschweiger Zeitung (12/15) editorialized: "It is certainly true
that Berlusconi himself has considerably contributed to inflicting
serious damage on Italy's political culture. He has blurred the
limits between political and economic power. Nevertheless, the
secret
delight at the attack should not be allowed. It is appropriate to
show sympathy. Politicians need contact with the people--they must

have a chance to shake hands and public appearances are indispensable and must remain possible."

15. (Germany-Afghanistan) Afghanistan/ zu Guttenberg

ARD-TV's Tagesthemen (12/14) opined: "The smart political star has made a mistake, which he has already admitted. I've never heard something like this before from a minister. However, he cannot afford to make another mistake.... Germany must urgently get to terms with a grand illusion: the German army is not a friendly and restrained army in Afghanistan. It is an army that has been in a war-like situation for some time. It fights and is also allowed to kill. All German governments in recent years did not want to express this truth.

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This country needs an open discussion about the shortcomings, the extent and the duration of the Bundeswehr mission. The chancellor should take the lead. It's now her turn - staying quiet would be wrong."

N-TV (12/14) commented: "Since August it is clear that fleeing Taliban can be hunted down and that weapons may be used. Anyway, it is a very artificial distinction whether one attacks fuel tankers or those who kidnapped them, meaning enemy combatants.... It is high time that the lies in this whole debate are stopped. At least since a year and a half, German troops in Kunduz are at war. It has turned into a new Taliban stronghold. At war there is the right to eliminate enemies."

According to Berliner Morgenpost (12/15), "people can see in Berlin these days how difficult it is to bid farewell to wishful thinking, i.e. that Germany should serve the international community only as a peace angel, at best as a pacifist force. A Bundestag fact-finding committee will now investigate the bomb attack near Kunduz. We hope that all parliamentarians in the committee will ignore the usual partisan superficial views and instead make a contribution to reality and truth for this country." Der Tagesspiegel (12/15) editorialized: "Is this a war or not? Is the Bundeswehr mandate correct? Do we want this mission? These are questions which are being directed to the politicians responsible: to the chancellor, to the 'supreme commander.' She must explain her position. Now! The Kunduz incident is threatening to become a national affair and a disaster at the international level."

Handelsblatt (12/15) opined: "The fact that the government is trying to use all tricks to dodge its responsibility is a brazen piece of contempt of democracy. It is an unmistakable sign that it has something to hide." Regional daily Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung of Essen (12/15) notes that "three months after the militarily successful but horribly misguided air strike near Kunduz, the illusion that 'we-defend-Afghanistan-and our-freedom' is collapsing. It was

built right from the start on lies and half truths." In the view of Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung (12/15), "no one in Berlin wanted to realize that the fight against the Taliban is now under full swing. But if the Bundestag votes on a military mission, it must know what this operation looks like. Now a new start in Germany's Afghanistan policy is necessary. It is true that Angela Merkel inherited this mission from her predecessor, but she must now make sense of the

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mission or bring it to an end."

Regional daily Nordsee-Zeitung of Oldenburg (12/15) observed: "Much more is at stake than a defense minister who has difficulty defending his position. At issue is how little humanitarian this international [Bundeswehr] mission is and how little it is oriented to security efforts. At issue is that the claim of sending responsible citizens in uniform has been forgotten. The events surrounding the bomb attack near Kunduz suggest that the tough professionals of the KSK Special Forces are setting the tone. But when they do what they were trained for, there will again be a great outrage. And this is a serious German perception disorder."

16. (Greece) Financial Crisis

Several papers (12/15) reported of the Greece's financial problems.

Sueddeutsche headlined: "Athens's Excesses," and sub-titled: "Greece is Shocked at its Financial Misery." The paper reported: "Greece is fighting for its credibility. Prime Minister Papandreou planned to

present a paper on the restructuring of the country's shattered finances, while Finance Minister Papakonstantinou is trying to take

fears from the Europeans that the Greek financial system could collapse....

One of the greatest problems of the country is the inflated state bureaucracy which has served all previous governments to find jobs for relatives and acquaintances."

Die Welt (12/15) headlined: "IWF head Snower Warns Against Greece's

Collapse," and reported: "The Kiel-based Institute for the Global Economy (IWF) warned against an escalation of the situation in highly indebted Greece. Snower said: 'The situation in Greece is really serious, and the danger of a state bankruptcy is real.' At the same

time, the economists opposed any financial EU assistance. He said: 'Greece must help itself. It would be wrong if Brussels came to the

rescue with financial assistance.'"

In a report under the headline: "Papandreou Announced 'Radical Reforms,'" Handelsblatt (12/15) wrote: "With a tough speech, Greece's socialist Prime Minister Papandreou prepared his compatriots for 'radical reforms' and 'painful cuts' to come to terms with the current financial crisis and to avoid the danger of a state bankruptcy. He said that the sovereignty of the country would be in danger and added:

'Either we change or we will go down' and appealed to all Greeks to join forces to master the crisis."

Under the headline: "The Greek Patient," Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/15) editorialized: "It is a truism but Greece should never have

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been accepted in the euro zone in 2001. The collective irresponsibility of Greek governments is clearly older than the European Monetary Union. But at the latest since the rating of the

country fell below the A level, the trust bonus is over. And the longer [experts] discuss whether a supranational creditor should help

out - i.e. other EU member states - the more often we will hear an alternative demand: the country that has never acquired the maturity

to become a member of the euro zone, and must leave the monetary union. However, the EU officials hope that the Greeks will manage a

turnaround. But because of the tense domestic situation this is a risky calculation. It is more likely that the biggest [EU members]

will help out instead of Greece being excluded [from the Monetary Union]. This little- reassuring perspective at least allows one conclusion from the Greek dilemma: The acceptance of new candidates to

the euro zone will require greater strictness and care."

MURPHY